

# Employment, Disability Status, and Job Quality

Megan Henly and Debra L. Brucker

**Issue:** People with disabilities (PWD) have lower labor force participation and employment. PWD comprise 10.2% of the working-age population.

JANUARY 2020	Labor Force Participation Rate		Employment-Population Ratio	
	Jan '19	Jan '20	Jan '19	Jan '20
	33.0	33.6	29.8	30.7
	% change ↑ 1.8		% change ↑ 3.0	
	76.9	77.4	73.6	74.4
	% change ↑ 0.7		% change ↑ 1.1	

\* PWD – People with disabilities; PWOD – People without disabilities  
Source: Kessler Foundation/University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability

**Question:** Do inequalities extend among the employed? **Among those with a disability who are employed, how do they fare in the workforce? Do they have “good jobs”?**

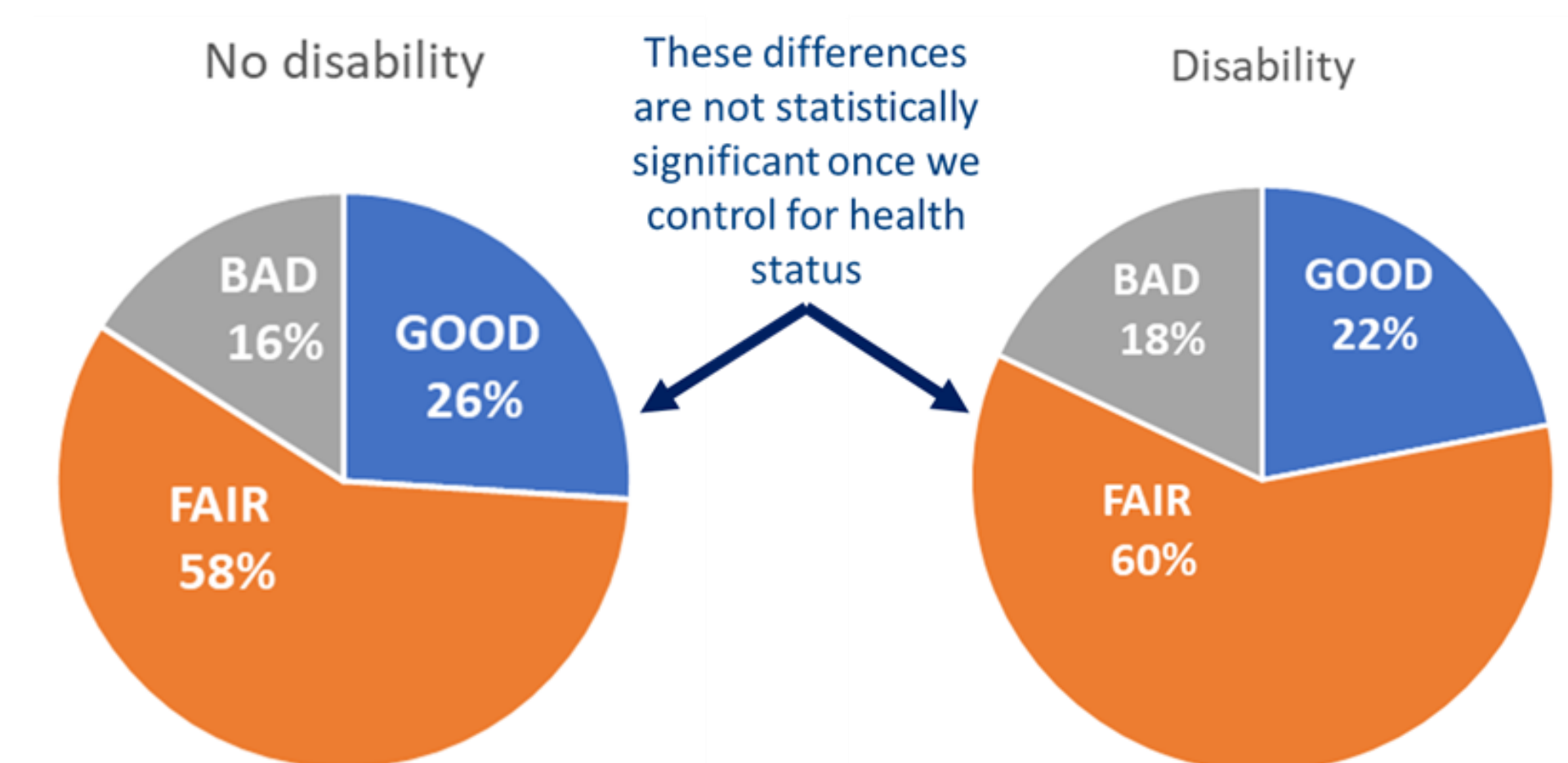
**Short answer:** **U.S. workers with disabilities are less likely to have “good jobs” compared to workers with no disability.** This finding is repeated using different measures (of both job quality and of disability), controlling for other covariates of job quality, and looking at different populations.

## Analysis 1: Pay & benefits

**Population studied:** Workers who self reported any of six disability types on the 2014-2016 Current Population Survey-ASEC.

**Job Quality Measure:** A job that offers health insurance benefits, pays higher than median wages, and offers a retirement program.

**Findings:** At bivariate level, PWD less likely to have a “good job”; after controlling for other factors, these differences are minimal.

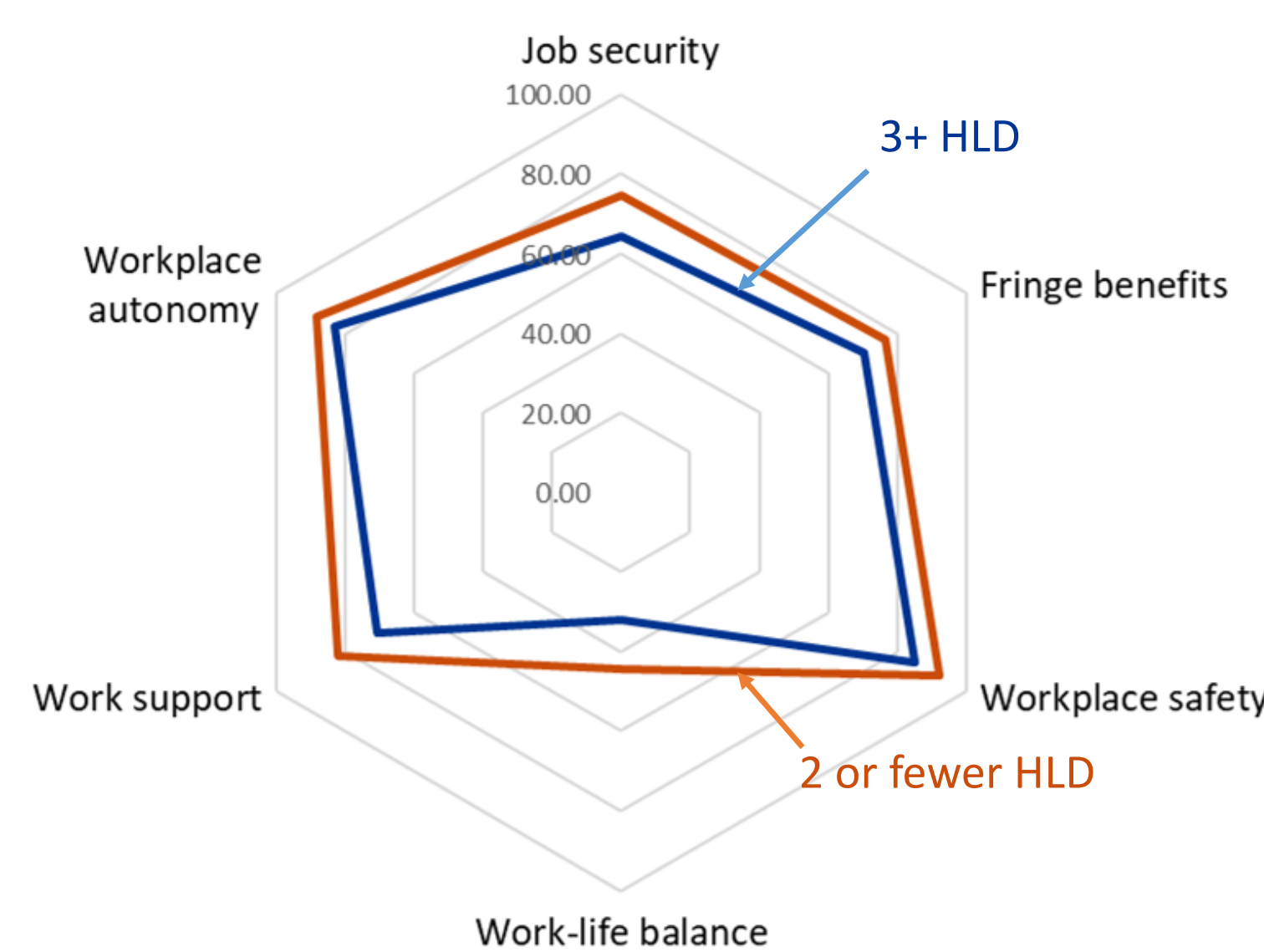


## Analysis 2: Benefits & other factors

**Population studied:** Workers with more than 3 days of activity limitations due to poor physical or mental health on the 2014 & 2018 General Social Survey.

**Job Quality Measure:** Worker self-assessment of 6 dimensions (at right).

**Findings:** Workers with more health limitation days (HLD) reported lower levels of job quality in all aspects, even after controlling for other socio-demographic characteristics.

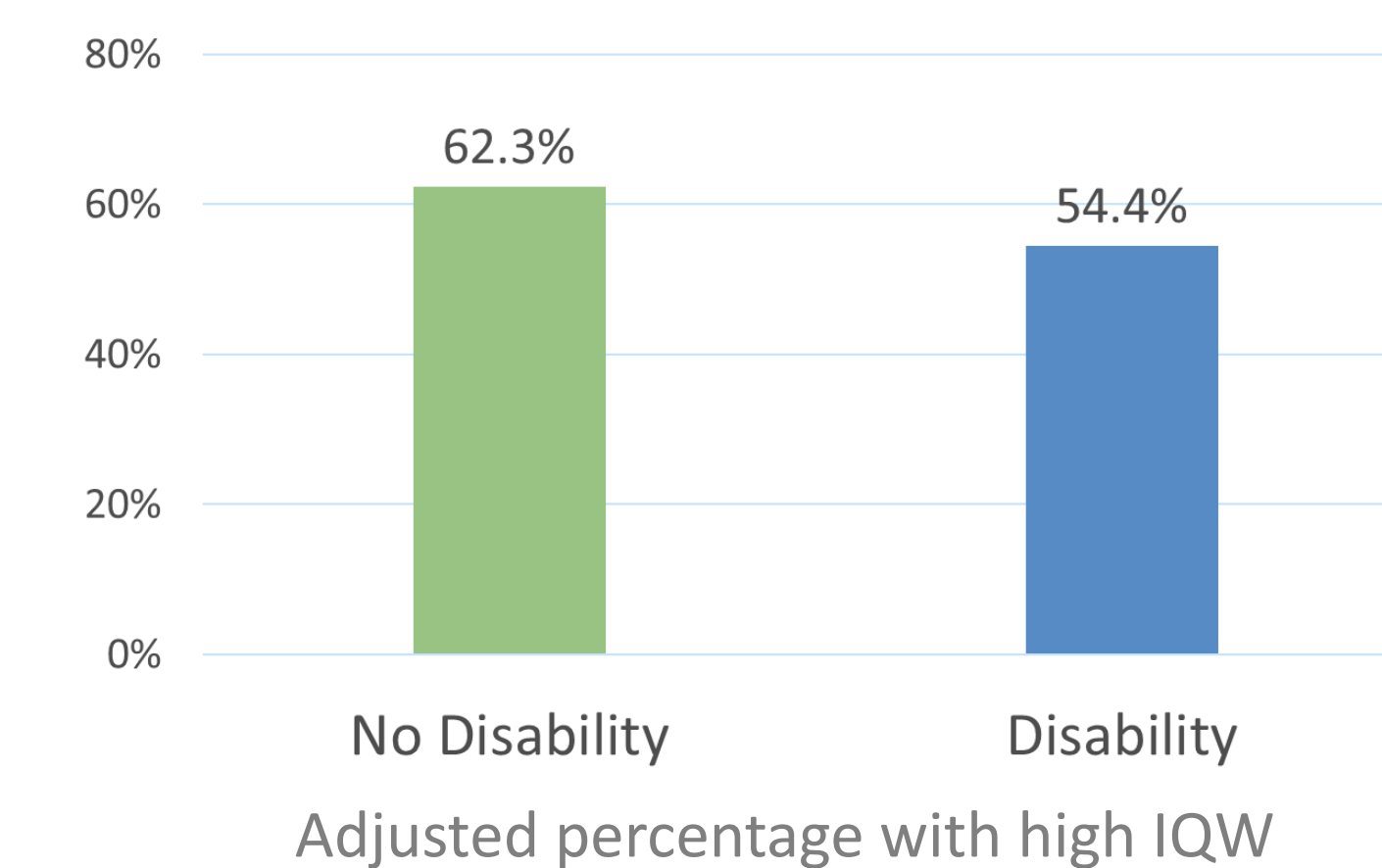


## Analysis 3: Intrinsic job quality

**Population studied:** College graduates who self reported any of six disability questions and were employed full time on the 2017 National Survey of College Graduates.

**Job Quality Measure:** Intrinsic qualities of work (IQW), including autonomy, powerfulness, meaningfulness, and self-fulfillment

**Finding:** After controlling for other factors, workers with a disability had 29% lower odds of having a job high in intrinsic job quality compared to those with no disability.

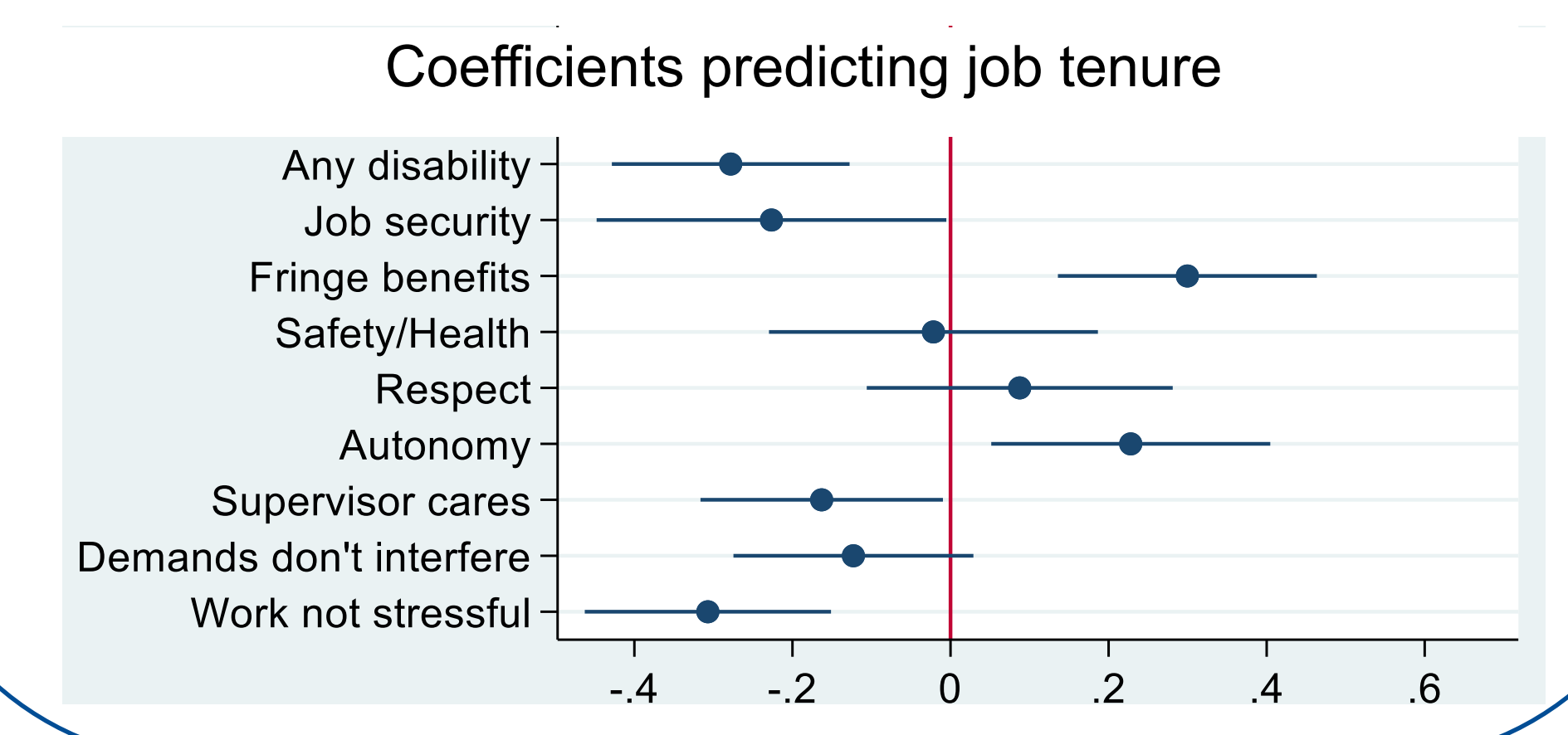


## Analysis 4. Job quality & Job tenure

**Population studied:** Our own online survey of workers. Disability is assessed as either having functional difficulties in 5 areas or having a psychiatric or developmental disability diagnosis.

**Job Quality Measure:** Constructed from 8 questions asking about job security, benefits, safety & health, respect, autonomy, supervisory support, work/life balance, and stress.

**Finding:** PWD have shorter job tenure than others when controlling for job quality, individual characteristics, and job characteristics.



## Conclusions

Understanding *employment patterns* means looking at a variety of measures, not just labor force participation.

There are different ways to assess job quality. For some measures, workers with a disability have substantially lower rates of job quality than workers with no disability.

## List of our publications

- Brucker, D., & Henly, M. (2019). Job quality for Americans with disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 50(2):121-130. doi: 10.3233/JVR-180994
- Brucker, D. L., & Henly, M. American full-time workers with activity limitations are less likely to hold good quality jobs. Manuscript in preparation.
- Henly, M., & Brucker, D. L. (2020). More than just lower wages: Intrinsic job quality for college graduates with disabilities. *Journal of Education and Work*, 33(5-6): 410-424. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2020.1842865
- Brucker, D.L., Henly, M., & Rafal, M. (2022) The association of disability status with job tenure for U.S. workers. *Work: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation*, pre-press. doi: 10.3233/WOR-205004

This work was supported by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment Policy and Measurement at the University of New Hampshire, which is funded by the National Institute for Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, in the Administration for Community Living, at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) under cooperative agreement 9ORT5037-02-00. The contents do not necessarily represent the policy of DHHS and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government (EDGAR, 75.620 (b))